

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 14393 of the President and Directors of Mount Vernon College, pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for a special exception under Paragraph 3101.46 for modification of and further development of the approved Mount Vernon College Campus Plan to permit the construction of a library in an R-1-A and R-1-B District at premises 2100 Foxhall Road, N.W., (Square 1374, Lot 850).

HEARING DATE: February 12, 1986

DECISION DATE: February 12, 1986 (Bench Decision)

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The subject premises, Mount Vernon College campus, is bounded on the north by W Street, N.W., on the east by Foxhall Road, on the south by Whitehaven Parkway and on the west by the college's property line. The campus is split zoned R-1-A and R-1-B with the principal portion of the campus located in the R-1-A District. The College is known as premises 2100 Foxhall Road N.W.

2. Mount Vernon College is located on a tract of land containing approximately 25 acres. The existing campus, depicted on Exhibit J entitled "Existing Campus Plan of Mount Vernon Junior College" consists of a Gatehouse (approved and constructed pursuant to BZA Order No. 9952, dated April 10, 1969); an academic building; Acheson Science Building; seven dormitories. (Ames, Clark, Cole, Helmsley, Merriweather, Somers and Pelham; Pelham was approved and constructed pursuant to BZA Order No. 10113, dated November 3, 1969); a pub; an administration building; an admissions building; Lloyd Gymnasium; a maintenance building; a chapel (approved pursuant to BZA Order No. 9531, dated November 12, 1968); and outdoor athletic facilities including a playing field, six tennis courts, and a swimming pool. Parking for a total of 214 cars is provided at various locations about the campus.

3. The surrounding neighborhood is characterized by single family detached dwellings several of which are located on large tracts of land.

4. The requested relief in the subject application is as follows:

- A. Approval of proposed location and construction of new library in accordance with original Campus Plan.
- B. Updating of original Plan to reflect new construction, pursuant to Board approvals, campus boundary changes and future building location adjustments.

5. The Mount Vernon College Campus Plan was approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment on May 22, 1967 in BZA Order 9142. The Board finds that the academic program of the college has not changed significantly since the approval of the original plan. The size of the faculty has increased only slightly from 30 to 33 full-time equivalent faculty members. Further, the current enrollment of 420 full time equivalent students is well within the guideline maximum of 1000 students set forth in the plan.

6. There has been new construction on the campus since the time of the Plan's adoption. A chapel, a gatehouse and a dormitory have been built pursuant to the approval of the Board of Zoning Adjustment.

7. The current library is described in the Plan as inadequate for the future needs of the college. The Plan emphasizes the lack of sufficient study areas and stack space. The Board finds, based on the testimony of the applicant that the existing facility, which is located on the ground level of the Academic Building, is crowded, noisy and functionally disjointed.

8. The proposed library is a three story brick structure containing approximately 32,357 square feet of gross floor area. The project will be located on the eastern side of the campus between the Cole and Somers dormitories. The original Plan proposed to locate the library in the central part of the campus. The new site was chosen in order to facilitate maximum use of the building and to avoid a costly relocation of the tennis courts. The Boards finds that the library will be a dramatically improved facility for the college. Ample study space will be provided for the students and the new facility will be able to accommodate several thousand more volumes. The proposed library will contain study rooms, a staff lounge, audio-visual facilities, an auditorium and conference rooms as well as the more typical features of a library. The Board finds that students will be provided with a much needed academic center that will be appropriately located in the academic quadrangle of the campus.

9. Mount Vernon College also seeks to update the current Campus Plan to reflect the new construction on campus, boundary changes and minor adjustments in the

location of future buildings. The Board finds that the Illustrative Master Plan for Mount Vernon College brings the current plan up-to-date by reflecting the construction of a chapel, a gatehouse and a dormitory. The Master Plan also shows a boundary change in the southwestern corner of the campus that resulted from the college's sale of a parcel of land to St. Patrick's Episcopal Church. St. Patrick's Church was granted a special exception to use the site in connection with an addition to its private school and child development center in BZA Order No. 14009. Finally, the Master Plan shows certain adjustments of future building locations.

10. The Illustrative Master Plan shows a centralized academic and administrative facility near the corner of Whitehaven Parkway and Foxhall Road. This building represents a consolidation of the space designated for future academic and administrative uses in the original Plan.

11. The Illustrative Master Plan adjusts the location of the future auditorium by moving it slightly to the west of its originally proposed location. The future auditorium has been recharacterized as part of a physical education facility.

12. The Board finds that Mount Vernon College has existed as an educational institution in the District of Columbia since 1875. The college was accredited as a four-year institution by the Middle State Association of College and Secondary Schools in 1973. It is licensed by the Educational Institution Licensure Commission. The Board finds that as a college, Mount Vernon is eligible to apply for a special exception under Paragraph 3101.46 of the Zoning Regulations.

13. Paragraph 3101.46 of the Zoning Regulations provides that a college or university which is an academic institution of higher learning, including a college or university hospital, dormitory, fraternity or sorority house proposed to be located on the campus of a college or university, is permitted as a special exception in a residential district, provided that:

- A. Such use is so located that it is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or other objectionable condition;
- B. In R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5-A and R-5-B Districts, the maximum bulk requirements normally applicable in such districts may be increased for specific buildings or structures provided the total bulk of all buildings and structures on the campus shall

not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-B District;

- C. The applicant shall submit to the Board a plan for developing the campus as a whole, showing the location, height, and bulk, where appropriate, of all present and proposed improvements, including, but not limited to buildings, parking and loading facilities, screening, signs, streets, and public utility facilities, and a description of all activities conducted or to be conducted therein, and of the capacity of all present and proposed campus development;
- D. Within a reasonable distance of the college or university campus, the Board may also permit the interim use of land or improved property with any use which the Board may determine is a proper college or university function; and
- E. Before taking final action on an application for such use, the Board shall have submitted the application to the District of Columbia Office of Planning and the District of Columbia Department of Transportation for review and report.

14. The proposed adjustments to the approved Campus Plan meet the requirements of Paragraph 3101.46 of the Zoning Regulations. Specifically, pursuant to Subparagraph 3101.463, the college has previously filed its Long-Range Plan for developing the campus as a whole. The Plan includes a description of the activities conducted or to be conducted on campus.

15. Subparagraph 3101.461 requires that a college or university use be so located that it is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, number of students or objectionable conditions. The Board finds that the location of the library and the nature of the use are such that no objectionable conditions will result.

16. The Board finds that the construction of a new library is consistent with the spirit and intent of the approved Campus Plan. The Plan envisions the need for a library of a size comparable to the proposed structure. The existing library is characterized as having insufficient shelf and study space and inadequate technical and storage facilities. The new facility is capable of accommodating the number of volumes required for the college to maintain its accreditation and will increase the available study space. The Board finds that it will address the concerns expressed in the Plan and is therefore entirely consistent with its intent.

17. The Board finds that the Plan must also be updated to reflect the construction on the campus pursuant to prior Board approvals, boundary changes and minor future building location adjustments. The applicant seeks to amend the Illustrative Master Plan to the Campus Plan. The Board finds that the Master Plan accurately addresses the changes that have occurred on the campus and also details the adjustments in future building locations. These adjustments are necessary to insure the orderly growth and development of the college.

18. The Board finds that the need for increased academic and administrative space is recognized in the original Plan. The faculty offices are characterized as being almost totally inadequate. The Board finds that through a consolidation of the space designated for future academic and administrative uses in the original Plan, the college will address these needs in an efficient and economical manner. The proposed location at the gateway to the campus is appropriate for a facility that ultimately will house the admissions office. The Board finds that the location of the building and proposed use will not create objectionable conditions.

19. The Board finds that a new physical education facility will serve the dual purpose of enhancing the athletic program of the college while obviating the need for a separate auditorium. The Board finds that the proposed structure will not create objectionable conditions.

20. Based on the testimony of the applicant's traffic expert witness, the Board finds that the proposed library will not create objectionable traffic conditions in the area surrounding the campus or on the campus itself. Because the project does not involve an increase in enrollment, it will not generate any additional traffic. The vehicular circulation patterns will remain the same. Further, the college has planned to restripe the existing parking spaces in an effort to increase the total number of spaces on the campus. Although some spaces will be lost due to the development of the existing site, after the project has been completed, there will be a net gain of approximately seven spaces creating a total of approximately 221 spaces.

21. The Board finds that there will not be an increase in student enrollment or number of faculty members as a result of the new library. The present enrollment is well within the guideline maximum of 1000 students set forth in the Plan. The size of the faculty will also remain the same.

22. The Board finds, based on the testimony of the architect that the current floor area ratio for the campus is .173. This figure takes into account the campus

boundary adjustment. This project will add approximately 32,357 square feet of gross floor area, thereby increasing the floor area ratio for the campus to .207. The Board finds that this figure is well within the limit of 1.8 imposed by the Zoning Regulations. The Board finds that after the construction of the new library, approximately 10 percent of the lot area will consist of building coverage.

23. The Board finds that no interim use is being requested in this application.

24. The Office of Planning, by report dated February 5, 1986, recommended the approval of the proposed library facility and all modifications to the previously approved Campus Plan. The Office of Planning found that the proposed modifications are consistent with the spirit and intent of the approved plan. Further, the report noted that given the self-contained nature of the campus and small size of the college, it is doubtful that these modifications would create an adverse impact on the surrounding neighborhood. The Board concurs with the Office of Planning recommendations.

25. The Department of Public Works (DPW) by memorandum dated February 4, 1986 reported that the site is bounded on the north by W Street N.W., on the south by Whitehaven Parkway and on the east by Foxhall Road. MacArthur Boulevard and 48th Street, N.W. are located approximately 1000 feet west of the site. W Street is a 30 foot-wide local street with minimal traffic. Unrestricted parking is allowed on the street at all times. Whitehaven Parkway is a two-way local street with a 34-foot-wide pavement. Unrestricted parking is allowed at all times. Foxhall Road is a four lane minor arterial with a 44 foot-wide pavement and an average daily traffic volume of 16,900 vehicles in the vicinity of the site. Parking is prohibited on Foxhall Road. MacArthur Boulevard is a two-way, four-lane minor arterial with a 50 foot-wide pavement, and a average daily traffic volume of 23,700 vehicles near the site. Parking is controlled by parking meters on both sides of the street in the vicinity of the site and 48th Street is a 30 foot-wide local street with unrestricted parking allowed at all times.

26. The site is served within five blocks on MacArthur Boulevard by four Metrobus routes including the D3, D4, D8 and D9 routes. The D3 and D9 routes including the D3, D4, D8 and D9 routes provide rush hour Metrobus service with 20 minutes headways from the Federal Triangle, Farragut Square and Foggy Bottom Metrorail stations. The D4 and D8 routes operate on a regular full-day schedule with 30 minutes headways. Service to these routes is provided from the Dupont Circle, Farragut West and Union Station Metrorail Stations.

27. In the opinion of the Department of Public Works the proposed library addition would have no adverse impact on the surrounding street system since, according to the applicant, it would not add to the campus population. The proposed supply of parking spaces appears to be adequate to accommodate the existing faculty, staff and student population. However, there is some indication that future increase in the campus populations would create a greater demand for parking than there are spaces available. This situation should be monitored closely to assure that an adequate parking arrangement is provided as the campus population increases to within the 1000 student ceiling established by the Board of Zoning Adjustment.

Although the library addition is the subject of this application, the DPW noted that the applicant has included as part of the submission, a revised campus plan. The revised campus plan calls for the relocation and rearrangement of the parking spaces and the internal driveway design and circulation. The Department of Public Works requested that a more detailed parking layout be provided which shows the dimensions, design and location of each space. The existing site plan lacks sufficient detail to determine the workability of the proposed parking layout. The Board finds that a more detailed parking plan was provided at the public hearing. The Board concurs with the reasoning and recommendation of the DPW.

28. ANC 3D filed a report on February 3, 1986. The ANC voted unanimously to support the application. The ANC urged the Board to maintain or increase the parking spaces on campus. The ANC further reported that some concern was raised about the routing and impact of enstructure vehicles upon the rush hour traffic, particularly in the morning. There was also some concern about students parking on W Street N.W. The Board concurs with the concern of the ANC and its recommendation. The Board is aware that the College will heed the concerns of the neighbors. The Board further notes that there will be additional parking spaces on campus.

29. There was no opposition to the application at the Public Hearing of record.

CONCLUSION OF LAW AND OPINIONS:


Based on the record, the Board concludes that the applicant is seeking a special exception, the granting of which requires compliance with the requirements of Paragraph 3101.46 and that the relief requested can be granted as in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and that it will not tend to affect adversely the use of the neighboring property. The Board concludes that the applicant has met its burden of proof. The Board

concludes that the use is located so as not to become objectionable to neighboring property. The total bulk of all buildings and structures on the campus does not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-B District. The applicant has previously submitted a plan for developing the campus as a whole. The Office of Planning has reported favorably on the application. The Board further concludes that the application can be granted as in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property. Accordingly, it is ORDERED that the application is hereby GRANTED.

VOTE: 4-0 (Paula Jewell, Charles R. Norris, Maybelle T. Bennett, and Carrie L. Thornhill to grant, William F. McIntosh not present, not voting).

BY ORDER OF THE D.C. BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

ATTESTED BY:


CECIL B. TUCKER
Acting Executive Director

FINAL DATE OF ORDER:

08 APR 1995

UNDER SUB-SECTION 8204.3 OF THE ZONING REGULATIONS, "NO DECISION OR ORDER OF THE BOARD SHALL TAKE EFFECT UNTIL TEN DAYS AFTER HAVING BECOME FINAL PURSUANT TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT."

THIS ORDER OF THE BOARD IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDER, UNLESS WITHIN SUCH PERIOD AN APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING PERMIT OR CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY IS FILED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS.

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